

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 13218 182241Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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P 182234Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9329
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: MASS EG US
SUBJECT: REACTION TO AIRCRAFT PACKAGE

SUMMARY. IN CONTINUING HEAVY COVERAGE A/C DEAL, PRESS
MAY 18 HIGHLIGHTS SAME THEMES, ESPECIALLY ISRAELI
DISCOMFURE AND DEFEAT OF ZIONIST PRESSURE GROUPS.
PEACE PROCESS MUST CONTINUE AND ONE EDITORIALIST SUGGESTS
IT NOW TIME FOR EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSAL. ANOTHER
THEME EMERGING AMONG EGYPTIANS IS IF SUCH TITANIC STRUGGLE
NEEDED FOR A/C PURCHASE, HOW MUCH GREATER WILL BE STRUGGLE
TO GET SUBSTANTIVE CONCESSIONS FROM ISRAELIS. END
SUMMARY.

1. ISRAELI REACTION. AHRAM MAY 18 PORTRAYS IN BANNER
HEADLINES THE "RAGE" IN ISRAEL OVER SENATE APPROVAL.
BEGIN STATEMENT THAT APPROVAL IS "ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE PEACE
CONDITIONS ON ISRAEL" ALSO APPEARS IN HEADLINES, ALONG
WITH PERES STATEMENT BLAMING BEGIN FOR RESULT
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IN SENATE. PAPERS ALSO HIGHLIGHT NEW YORK TIMES OPINION
THAT DEAL APPROVAL MEANS "SHARP CHANGE" IN SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN U.S. AND ISRAEL. AKHBAR HEADLINE
SAYS DEAL "VIOLENT SHOCK" TO ISRAEL AND A DEFEAT FOR
"ZIONIST INFLUENCE". IN COMMENTARY, GUMHURIYYA'S HODA
TEWFIK SEES NEW AMERICAN TREND THAT U.S. INTERESTS COME
BEFORE THOSE OF ISRAEL.

2. SATISFACTION. HODA TEWFIK ALSO DECLARES APPROVAL REMOVES MAJOR OBSTACLE IN WAY OF PEACE AND WAY NOW CLEAR FOR "POSITIVE ACTION". POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DEAL FAVOR PEACE PROCESS AS WELL AS STRENGTHEN SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS. TEWFIK FEARS ISRAEL MAY NOW STALL MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE AND CONCLUDES THERE NOW NEED FOR EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSAL TO BEGIN FORMULA "WHICH HAS BEGUN TO CREEP INTO AMERICAN MIND AS SUITABLE BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. MINWAR GAMASY PRAISED POLITICAL AND MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF DEAL (SEPTTEL). IN SLAP AT SOVIETS, AHRAH EDITORIAL LUMPS SOVIET AND ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO ARMS DEAL TOGETHER, SAYING SOVIETS WANT TO KEEP ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT OPEN AS A "GAP THROUGH WHICH THEY CAN PENETRATE AREA".

3. F-5E CAPABILITY. HODA TEWFIK, UNLIKE GAMASY, DOWNPLAYED DEAL AS "NOT OF MAJOR MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE". SHE SAYS IT WILL NOT ALTER MILITARY BALANCE BUT WILL USHER IN "NEW MILITARY RELATION" BETWEEN EGYPT AND AMERICA.

4. COMMENT. THEMES FROM YESTERDAY STILL HIGHLIGHTED, ESPECIALLY ISRAELI DISTRESS, SIGNIFICANCE OF DEFEAT OF PRESSURE GROUPS, AND IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING PEACE PROCESS. (ALTHOUGH ON LATTER POINT, TEWFIK CALL FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COUNTERPROPOSAL NOT IN LINE WITH GOE OFT-STATED POSITION THAT NEXT MOVE UP TO ISRAELIS.) PRIVATELY, WE STILL HEARING THAT ARMS DEAL IS "FIRST STEP" BUT U.S. HAS MORE TO DO. ANOTHER THEME WHICH EMERGING IN PRIVATE COMMENTS, MOST RECENTLY BY HEAD OF MFA POLICY PLANNING, IS THAT IF SUCH TITANIC STRUGGLE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN APPROVAL OF ARMS SALE, HOW CAN U.S. MOVE ISRAELIS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES? MATTHEWS

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